# STORIES FROM THE FIELD
## Bolivian Communities Take Action Against GBV

**Project empowers communities to implement local gender-based violence policies and programs through family planning and reproductive health services**



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*"What I like the most about this project is that it is our project and that we are responsible for its success, because we can see that violence does exist in our community, our families, and our institutions, and we have to find alternatives to it."*
*—Municipal authority Quillacas, Bolivia*

Gender-based violence (GBV) is of increasing concern in Bolivia, where 6 out 10 women and 3 out of 10 men report having experienced violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime. Frustrated with the alarming rate of GBV, community leaders launched the *Avances de Paz* (Advances of Peace) project, implemented from June 2006 to 2008. The project built a bottom-up movement within the community to integrate family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH) policy with efforts to prevent GBV, having found a strong negative correlation between GBV and the use of FP/RH services. It also advocated for and supported the implementation of GBV policies by developing effective interventions in municipalities. The communities involved (Quillacas, Machareti, Oruro, and El Alto) welcomed the initiative with open arms and made the project's goals and values their own.

*Avances de Paz* thrived as a result of technical assistance from the USAID | Health Policy Initiative. Assistance included cultivating relationships with community leaders, providing them with GBV awareness training, and helping them create a coherent social network committed to preventing GBV.

The project had four phases:

> The community research and learning phase focused on identifying the roles of gender, power, and participation in current community responses to GBV; and fostering dialogue and awareness about GBV.

> In the second phase, analysis and planning encouraged consensus around the issues, their root causes, and opportunities for change; and strengthened community participation in advocating for plans at the municipal level.

> The implementation phase included obtaining political support and funding for the proposed activities.

> Finally, the community monitoring phase established mechanisms for community vigilance and control and engaged community constituencies in monitoring responses to GBV.

*Avances de Paz* activities resulted in increased community awareness and action surrounding the prevention and reduction of GBV—largely attained through participation in public dialogue and the implementation of local-level policies. All four municipalities involved in the project designed and funded local government plans to organize or strengthen networks against GBV, improve health and legal services available to people affected by GBV, and conduct additional awareness-raising activities about other forms of gender-related discrimination and oppression. All four action plans have been funded either by the municipal governments (in Quillacas and Machareti) or by other sources (in Oruro and El Alto). Approximately 1,000 people participated in the process across the four municipalities, and 40 percent of the participants were youth.

The project also succeeded in getting the process adopted and implemented in other municipalities. The dedication of all the municipalities has fostered great progress in raising awareness of gender-based violence in Bolivian communities, strengthening GBV services at the local level, and providing a model that can be adopted by other organizations and communities. The project has laid the foundation for continued progress in GBV prevention and is being adopted by new organizations and communities.

The implementing partners of *Avances de Paz* included CIES Oruro, CIES Machareti, CIES EL Alto, Pro Mujer, APROSAR, CEMSE, CIEP, PROSALUD, and Project Concern.

Groups that have expressed interest in replicating the project include Christian Children's Fund, UNICEF, other members of the PROCOSI network, and CIES Nacional.

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